The Underlying Concept Of The Daily Prayers (salat)

Ayatullah Sayyid Ali Khamene'i
(Leader of the I.R.IRAN)

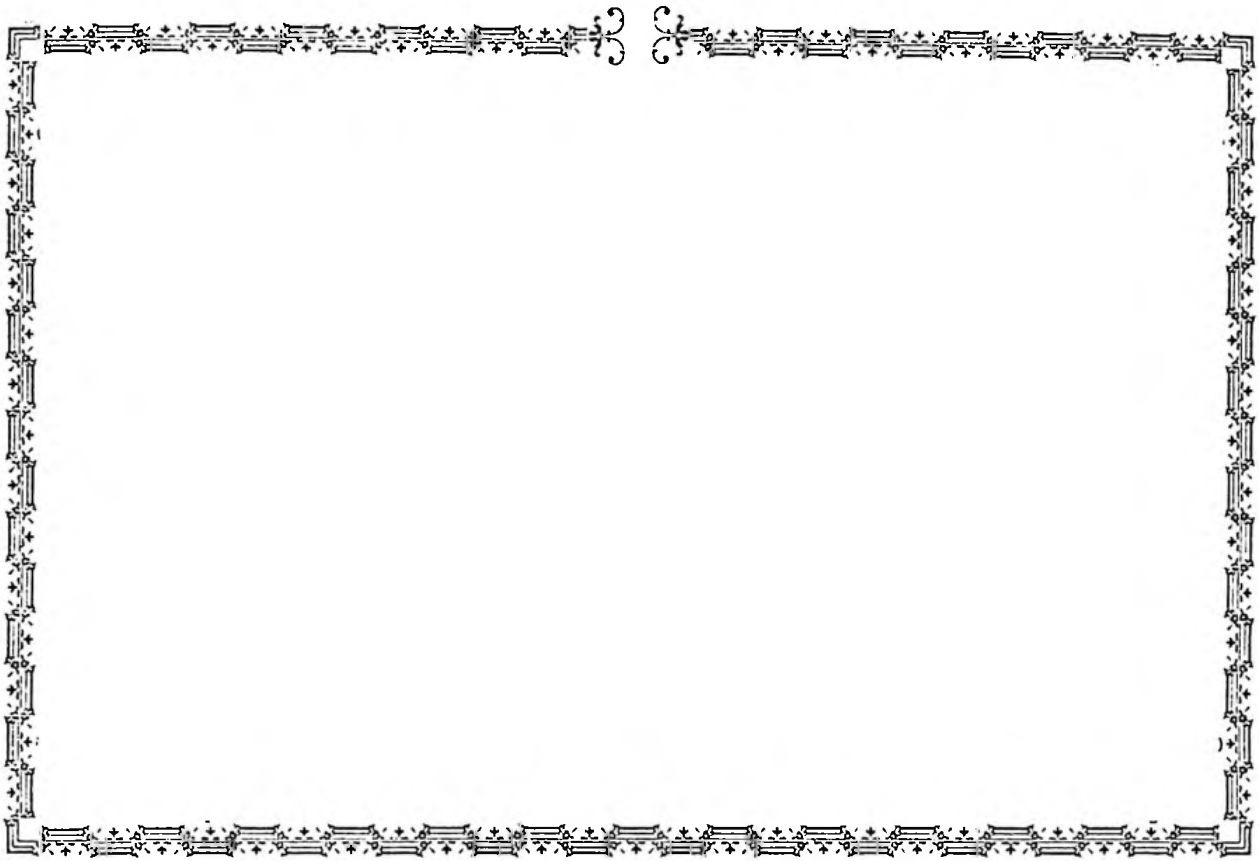
Translated by
Hussein Kayhan

Islamic Research Foundation
Astan Quds Razavi
Mashhad - IRAN

ISBN 964-444-282-2

۲۴۵
۸۸۹۰۳۸۲۲

IN THE NAME OF GOD
the Beneficient, the Merciful



Ayatullah Sayyid 'Ali Khamene'i
(Leader of the Islamic Revolution of Iran)

The Underlying Concept of the Daily Prayers (Ṣalāt)

[ازژرفای نماز]

3

Translated by
Ḥussein Kayhan

Islamic Research Foundation of
Astan Quds Razavi

Khamene'i, Ali خامنه‌ای، علی، رهبر جمهوری اسلامی ایران، ۱۳۱۸ -

[از ژرفای نماز. انگلیسی]
[آندر لایینگ کانسپت آو د دیلی پریرز «صلات»]
The underlying concept of the daily prayers (Salat) / Ali Khamene'i ; translated by Hussein Kayhan. - Mashhad: Astan Quds Razavi , Islamic Research Foundation, ۲۰۰۱ = ۱۳۸۰

ISBN 964-444-282-2

۷۲ ص.
فهرستنویسی بر اساس اطلاعات فیپا.
۱. نماز. الف. بنیاد پژوهشهای اسلامی Islamic Research Foundation
ب. کیهان، حسین, Kayhan, Hussein , مترجم. ج. عنوان. د. عنوان: از ژرفای نماز (انگلیسی). ه. عنوان The underlying concept of the daily prayers (Salat)

BP ۱۸۶/۲/خ۲ الف ۴۰۴۹۵۲
کتابخانه ملّی ایران

۲۹۷/۳۵۳
م۷۸ - ۲۵۵۱۴

Title:	**The underlying concept of the daily prayers (Salat)**
Author:	**Ayatullah Sayyid Ali Khamenei**
Translated by:	Hussein Kayhan
Editor:	Mrs. K.N. Ansari
Publisher:	Islamic Research Foundation of Astan Quds Razavi
Cover Designing by:	S.Massood Farhang
Circulation:	2000
Price:	2500 Rls
Second Edition:	2001
Printed by:	The Printing and Publishing Foundation of Astan Quds Razavi

Contents

Translator's Notes	7
Key to Transliteration	9
The Daily Prayers (Ṣalāt)	11
1. The Beginning of Ṣalāt - ALLĀHU - AKBAR	21
2. SŪRA - ḤAMD	22
BISMI'LLĀH AL-RAḤMĀN-AL-RAHIM	
a. ALḤAMDU LILLĀHI RABBI'L'ĀLAMĪN	23
b. AL-RAḤMĀN AL-RAḤĪM	25
c. MĀLIKI YAWM-AL-DĪN	26
d. IYYĀKA-NA'BUDU	27
e. WA IYYĀKA NASTA'ĪN	31
f. IHDINAS ṢIRĀṬA LMUSTQĪM	32
g. ṢIRĀṬ'LLADHĪNA AN'AMTA'ALAIHIM	33
h. GHAIR'LMAGHḌŪBI 'ALAIHIM	35
i. WA LAḌḌĀLLĪN	36
3. SŪRA	**38**
BISMI'LLĀH AL-RAḤMĀN AL-RAḤĪM	
a. QUL	39
b. HUWA'LLĀHU AḤAD	39
c. ALLĀH AṢ-ṢAMAD	40
d. LAM YALID	41
e. WA LAM YŪLAD	42

f. WA LAM YAKUN LAHŪ KUFUWAN AḤAD 43

4. TASBIḤĀT ARBA'A **45**

a. SUBḤĀN 'LLĀH 47

b. WA 'LḤAMDU LILLAH 49

c. WA LĀ ILĀHA ILLĀLLAH 50

d. WA'LLĀHU AKBAR 51

5. RUKŪ' **53**

SUBḤĀNA RABBĪA'L 'AZĪMI WA BIḤAMDIH

6. SUJŪD **54**

SUBḤĀNA RABBĪ'LA'LĀ WA-BIḤAMDIH

7. TASHAHHUD **55**

a. ASHHADU AN LĀ ILĀHA ILLALLĀH 56

b. WAḤDAHŪ 56

c. LA SHARĪKA-LAH 56

d. WA ASHHADU ANNA MUḤAMMADAN 'ABDUHŪ WA RASŪLUH 58

e. ALLĀHUMMA ṢALLI 'ALĀ MUḤAMMAD WA ĀL-I MUḤAMMAD 60

8. Ending the Ṣalāt **61**

a. AS-SALĀM 'ALAIKA AIYUHA 'L-NABI WA RAḤMAT ALLĀH WA BARAKĀTUHU 62

b. AS-SALĀM 'ALAINĀ WA 'ALĀ 'IBĀD ALLĀH AṢ-ṢĀLIḤĪN 63

c. AS-SALĀM 'ALAIKUM WA RAḤMAT ALLĀH WA BARAKĀTUHU 65

Notes & References 66

Translator's Notes

The study of this book has changed my daily prayers (Ṣalāt) for better. I hope it does, at least, the same for you.

I am grateful to colleagues and friends at the Islamic Research Foundation of Astan Quds Razavi in Mashhad, who introduced me to this book. In return I took upon myself to translate it into simple English for the benefit of millions of Muslims around the world who do not know Persian. I assume they know their daily prayers (Ṣalāt), but they do not know the underlying concept of why should they do them regularly. His Holiness Auatullah al-Uzma Sayyid ʿAli Khamene'i explains this aspect of salat very well. I tried to stay close to the original text, but in instances where I felt our readers in English may

not have the necessary background in the Qur'an and Hadith, I did not translate it literally. So, the discrepancies and the disparities found are in the translation but not in the original text. The intention is to spread the true words of Allah in all languages of the world.

This work would not have been possible if I did not have the support, professional help and the encouragements of Mr. Monshi Toosi, Mr. Nama'i and Mr. Tawakkoly. Mr. Mowlavi did the typesetting and Mr. Ataei looked after the elaborate job of printing. I am grateful to them all.

Finally, I dedicate this service to my children Assad and Monira Kayhan who like to learn more about Islam but do not have the resources.

Hussein Kayhan

Mashad - December 1994

The Arabic and Persian terms in the text are transliterated according to the following list.

ا	ʾ	س	s	ن	n
ب	b	ش	sh	و	w
پ	p	ص	ṣ	ه	h
ت	t	ض	ḍ	ی	y
ث	th	ط	ṭ	ـَ	a
ج	j	ظ	ẓ	ـِ	i
چ	ch	ع	ʿ	ـُ	u
ح	ḥ	غ	gh	آ	ā
خ	kh	ف	f	ای	ī
د	d	ق	q	او	ū
ذ	dh	ک	k	ـَو	aw
ر	r	گ	g	ـُو	ow
ز	z	ل	l	ـَی	ai
ژ	zh	م	m	ـِی	ei

بسم الله الرّحمن الرّحيم

BISMILLĀH AL-RAḤMĀN AL-RAḤĪM

(In the Name of Allah, the Beneficient the Merciful)

وَالَّذِينَ يُمَسِّكُونَ بِالكِتابِ وَ اَقامُوا الصَّلوةَ اِنَّا لا نُضيعُ اَجرَ المُصلِحينَ

And (as for) those who hold fast by the Book and keep up prayer, surely We do not waste the rewards of the right doers. (The Holy Qur'ān 7:170)

The Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) hath said that acts of genuflexion and prostration (in the ritual prayer) are (equivalent to) knocking the door-ring of (mystical) attainment on the Divine Portal.

When any one continues to knock that door-ring, felicity peeps out for his sake.[1]

A true prayer is an intimate relation between a person and his God, or between the Creator and the created.

Prayer has a therapeutic effect upon people specially, upon those whose hearts are broken, those who are in distress, or those who are disturbed and depressed. It soothes the spirit and tranquilizes the mind.

Prayer is the beginning of a sincere move to quit all one's wrongdoings and bad habits and an attempt to replace them by positive and serviceable acts.

It is a soul searching program for self discovery, personal development and self reconstruction.

In short, it is a means of connecting to the main source, the source of all goodness, namely, God ....

Let us see why Salat has been so highly recommended, and why it is considered to be the main pillar and the foundation of Islam.

Why are all other good deeds of people not credited to them unless they perform their daily prayers? Are there other benefits coming to us out of performing our daily prayers?

Certainly, the daily prayers have many more side benefits. We will explore them further as we go along.

First, let us look at the aim of the creation of mankind from the Islamic point of view. This is a central issue in Islam.

We believe that Almighty God created us, human beings, for a purpose.

Following a set path and reaching certain destinaton (without any deviation) would be that purpose.

Hence, we should clearly map our route for the final destination and always have the objective in our mind. Knowing that whoever sets forth for a journey should not loose sight of his objective and follow the straight path to it. Being careful that there are side

tracks and even sometimes similar paths which will not end up where he wants to go. He should stay off those. For added security and extra assuredness one better follow the instructions provided by the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.)

The objective and the purpose of all this is the growth and the continuous development of human being and the return to God. We must try to develop our latent and hidden potentials to the highest level possible. As a result becoming more humane and more refined and use all our talents for the betterment of ourselves - the World and the rest of human beings...

So, we should know Allah and follow the guideline He presecribed for man's exaltation.

The aim of following a guideline is to help people get more out of thier lives. Acquiring good habits and discarding the bad ones will encourage a person and give meaning to his life. A life without discretion is useless and aimless.

Here we can consider an analogy between the course of a life time and a course of study at school. We all know that attending classes or working in laboratories will not result in anything, unless certain rules and procedures are followed. The same argument is true about following a guideline in the

classroom of life. Here we have to learn and understand the laws and the principles formulated by God. Living by these laws and using them in our daily activities will result in success. Overlooking these laws or going against them will bring about nothing but despair.

Religion gives people the outline and the direction as to how to reach their goals and more important than that, it brings people close to God. This closeness to God and living always in the presence of God is the best provision one can take along in his journey. Since remembering God will remind us of where we are going (to attain perfection and to become the best we could be). God being perfect and the symbol of goodness, reminiscing about Him will help us stay on course. It also enhances our determination and our confidence in our pursuit, diminishes our fears of difficulties and prevents us from going astray.

Islamic societies as a whole and Muslims individually will be able to follow the Holy Prophets (S.A.W.) way or the Islamic doctrines if they always remember God. This is why Islam, by all means, tries to remind people of the presence of God. One of the very effective ways of doing that is to require performing the daily prayers (salat). Lots of

inspiration and fascination overtake people who are going throuth the prayers. Therer are signs, hints and many incentives to keep them absorbed and help them figure out the meaning of life.

Looking through people's daily activities, we rarely find them pondering about what is going on. The entanglements and the preoccupations with life are such that one can hardly find a free moment to think. Hours, days, weeks and months pass without any interruption, and we notice neither the beginnings nor the endings of these periods of life.

Assigned daily prayers, set at different intervals during the day, act like an alarmclock informing us as to the passing of time.[2] It is like a timetable drawing our attention to the fact that our days are numbered, life is short and we have a long way to go. The task is heavy, the deadline is closing in, so we better be prudent.

Under the pressure of everyday life, it is easy to loose sight of the real objective. It is not possible to remember all our resolutions and obligations. Moreover, there are not very many good models in the society to follow. Considering our shortcomings and our lack of discipline we know we cannot fulfil all the requirements of the school of Islam.

Here the daily prayer (ṣalāt) is the summary of the

doctrine of Islam, or Islam in miniature form. It reveals the main principles of Islam by its precalculated moves and steps.

In some ways only superficially, there is a resemblance between the prayer and a national anthem. Of course with differences in meaning and scope. A country through its national anthem, which contains some ideological principles and other social and cultural values, keeps ideals fresh and alive in the minds and in the hearts of its people.

By repetition, it becomes second nature and gradually people take it to heart. Reciting it together gives them a further boost in their commitments toward a common country and a common idealism. They feel united, brave and ready to serve their common cause.

In brief, salāt is the way of Islam. It draws our attention to the main principles, the duties, our responsibilities and the way to carry them out.

At set periods during the day: early in the morning, at midday, in the afternoon, in the evening and at night a Muslim is asked to pray. The main principles, the goals and the final objectives are stated and repeated several times by the worshipper. So he knows his duties and his responsibilities. He checks his course of action and adjusts himself to the right

path. This is the role of the daily prayers, through this a good Muslim reaches the highest level of humanity and spirituality, though, step by step. "Prayer acts as an ascension for a believer."[3]

Mankind has a long and a tedious way ahead of him to reach real prosperity and salvation. Completing that journey and getting there should be the aim and the objective of his existence.

In reality there is not only one single path ahead. There are many roads, some so very attractive and appealing, some dangerous and some that go no where. It makes it so difficult and confusing for anyone to choose the right way.

To spare one from all these perplexities, a person needs an ultimate goal, a better map and directions on how to get there.

Now it is apparent why the five times daily prayers (ṣalāt) are so important. Getting spiritual nourishment is like feeding the body a few times during the day.

It has been emphatically recommended that verses of the Qur'ān also be recited in each ṣalāt, so that the worshippers get more acquainted with the Qur'ān, and think more about the underlying concepts.[4] The obligatory daily prayers with all their rituals represents Islam in action, however on a small scale.

Islam is concerned about the body, the mind and

the soul of each person in the society. These entities are put to work individually, or in conjunction with one another for the welfare of mankind. During prayers (ṣalāt) the body, the mind and the soul of a worshipper are utilized.

The body: moving the hands, the feet, the tongue, bending, sitting, standing and prostrating are all bodily activities.

The mind: thinking about the meaning of the words, phrases, and the statements and also reviewing the basis and the fundamentals of Islam, will put the mind to work.

The soul: thinking about God, getting inspiration, fantasizing and imagining what would it be like to be close to God. The humility and the awe which sets in because of his activity cleanse the soul.

It has been said that in every religion, prayer is the summary of that religion. The same is true about the prayer in Islam. Combining the body and the soul, the substance and the meaning and the present life with the Hereafter are the distinctive features of Islam.

A Muslim can combine all his energies (physical, mental and the spiritual) together to help him get to a higher stage with the mere act of a perfect prayer (ṣalāt).

A true worshipper is capable of restraining his

carnal desires and other satanic temptations.

It is not the prayer (ṣalāt) by itself that has all those benefits. The process of going to pray or getting ready to perform salat is even more conducive.

There are more mentions of this stage of the ṣalāt in the Qur'an than the sole act of the daily prayer (ṣalāt).

Because a worshipper by announcing the time of the prayer can remind many others to come to ṣalāt. In this way he influences the people to remember God and think of what they are doing in comparison to what they should be doing. Looking more closely at a worshipper, we find changes in his attitudes like what he does or what he says, everything about this person is Godly. The atmosphere surrounding him and his behavior attract and invite more people to come in line with the daily ṣalāt.

Therefore we can say that a true believer or the community of worshippers, who are in line with the rituals of the daily prayers (ṣalāt) will have less problems and social diseases such as crimes, corruption and immoralities. In reality ṣalāt prevents people from indecent acts.[5]

In the struggle of everyday life, we notice how difficult it is to fight temptations, desires, needs and urges. The only weapon a person has against these is

his power of determination and self control. The evil forces, at the same time, try to take that away from the person. Once that control is gone, the rest is easy for the devil.

Those who have a message for humanity or want to leave something for history are more attractive to the devil. They have to be more careful and watchful than others in order not to have their determinations shattered.

Salāt in Islam has a wonderful and enhancing power over people. It has a special role of connecting the weak and vulnerable human beings to Almighty God, the Powerful and the Source of all goodness. Once this connection has been made the person feels more powerful, extended and stable. One can use prayers as an effective remedy for changing human weaknesses to strength and restoring one's confidence and determination.

The Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) during the advent of Islam, while facing the ingnorant and a mount of opposition, was ordered by God to perform his nightly prayers. Here are the words of God

يَا اَيُّهاَ المُزَّمِّلُ، قُمِ الَّيْلَ اِلاّ قَلِيلاً، نِصفَهُ اَو انقُص مِنهُ قَلِيلاً، اَو زِد عَلَيهِ وَ رَتِّلِ القُرآنَ تَرتِيلاً، اِنّا سَنُلقِي عَلَيكَ قَولاً ثَقِيلاً...

"You who are wrapped up. Rise to pray in the night except for a little part of it. It could be half or a bit

less than that or a bit more. Recite the Qur'ān as it should be recited. Because very soon we will cast a heavy statement upon you." (the Holy Qur'ān 73:1-5).

Let us examine the contents of the daily prayers (ṣalāt) without going further than the mere translation of the terms, and with the intention of increasing our understanding.

Ṣalāt begins with the name of God His Greatness, and the extent of His Being, as perceived by human beings.

الله اكبر

ALLĀHU - AKBAR

(God is Greater)

With this statement the worshipper begins the glorious proceedings: with such a splendid opening.

ALLĀHU AKBAR (God is Greater) .... Greater than what we can imagine, Greater than all other gods worshipped by people in the course of history. Greater than all the powers and forces which man will be frightened of or terrified by and expected to get support and energy from. Greater than one would dare disobey or break His laws.

Anyone who has recognized these facts and has

adjusted his activities accordingly feels strong and overwhelmed by uttering ALLĀHU AKBAR. He feels he is on solid ground, secure and advancing confidently.

After saying that statement the worshipper has officially entered the ṣalāt. He should recite (SŪRA ḤAMD)[6] and after that the worshipper should recite another SŪRA from The Qur'ān while still standing.

سورة حمد

SŪRA - ḤAMD

The Chapter of Praise

بسم الله الرّحمن الرّحيم

BISMI'LLĀH AL-RAḤMĀN - AL-RAḤĪM

(In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful)

In the name of God, Whose mercy embraces every one and His blessing is pervasive and everlasting.

This statement is the opening statement of every SŪRA in the Qur'ān and should be recited by all Muslims before starting any activities. Namely, it is desirable to start everything with the name of God. The beginning of one's life should be in the name of God and departing from this world in the name of

God. A Muslim starts his days with the name of God. He ends his daily activities whith the name of God. He goes to bed with the remembrance of God and with the help of God; he rises up and begins his daily work again. Eventually he departs from this world recalling God's name and moves towards eternity.

الحمدلله ربّ العالمين

ALḤAMDU LILLĀHI RABBI 'L 'ĀLAMĪN

(Praise is due to ALLĀH the Lord of the worlds)

All praises should be reserved for Him because all glories belong to Him and all blessings come from Him. All the good virtues are attributed to Him, and every benevolence, we can imagine originates from Him. Therefore, to praise Him is actually to praise the ultimate goodness and it gives a direction towards our getting closer to becoming good and perfect human beings.

If we have any "good bones" in our bodies we should believe they are coming from Him. It is He who created us in such a way that we can acquire goodness and attain greatness. He has given us the ability to make decisions, which by itself is another blessing towards this goal.

Through this God-given power or vision there is hope that mankind uses his potentials to promote the welfare of himself and that of others. He should not be selfish or let all these potentials go to waste or be used in the wrong way.

The expression رَبِّ العٰـــالَمين RABBI'L 'ĀLAMĪN (Lord of the worlds) implies the existence of other worlds and the relationship of these worlds to each other. Hence, the worshipper comes to think, there are more worlds, cosmos and other things beyond his limited vision. Allah is the Lord of the whole universe and of the entire creation. The worshipper's mind gets extended and he thinks more profoundly. He feels proud and fortunate of being able to have an understanding of all this.

He sees all human beings, animals, plants and the rest of what is in the universe, are created by God. His God is not solely for him, his race, his nation or his species, but, God is the Lord of many planets like ours and of many billions and billions of stars and galaxies. God is watching over us all, caring for the little creatures such as ants and even smaller than those and also large ones such as galaxies. With this concept in the back of his head a person does not feel alone, but he thinks of belonging to an extended family of men and other creatures. Specially, he feels

related and close to other beings believing they are all with him, on the same ship.

This large ship as a whole is moving in a predestined direction.

Realizing his relationship with other creatures he, then, feels obligated to help and guide human beings when he can and also to learn more about other things in the universe. He can draw benefits from these and use them wisely according to their functions.

الرّحمن الرّحيم

AL-RAḤMĀN AL-RAḤĪM

(The Beneficent, The Merciful)

In general, God's benevolence and good-will reaches all and every creature. Namely, everybody and everything is subjected to the natural laws and draws benefits from all God-given resources. (RAḤMĀN).

Now specifically, God's Grace and Mercy is directed towards mankind and specially towards those who worship Him and obey His directions. This special blessing is everlasting and stays with the people till eternity. (RAḤIM).

We see that there are general and temporary

blessings for everyone and more special and permanent ones for the people who excel themselves.

Mentioning the name of God and acknowledging His mercy giving is the opening statement of the Qur'ān, of the prayers and also of every SŪRA in the Qur'ān. This places more emphasis on God's Mercy and benevolence rather than His wrath and anger, the latter being withheld for the obstinate, stubborn, corrupt and the criminal. His grace is widespread and reaches everyone and everything.[7]

مالک یوم الدّین

MĀLIKI YAWM-AL-DĪN

(Master of the Judgement Day)

The Day of Judgement is the last day. Everybody struggles for it. The atheists and the materialists as well as the believers and the theists both groups agree there is a last Day. The difference is that each group has its own interpretation of it. The materialist sees it as the passing of time, hours, days and years go by. Then comes the old age and the end. But a believer in God has a more extended view of all this. He does not think life ends so abruptly, on the contrary he believes in the Judgement Day. This implies that he will do

things which he will be rewarded for and abstain from wrong doing, specially to other creatures because he will have to answer for what he does. Consequently a person with such a view will act responsibly and will remain hopeful to the end.

Recalling that at Resurrection, the Master of the Day of Judgement is God, the worshipper tries to direct all his attention to God and does almost everything for the sake of God. He acquires knowledge with the intention of advancing himself and also helping humanity. This is what God wants us to do.

On the other hand, knowing that God is going to be the Judge, the ideas of cheating, deceiving and pretension will not attract him so easily. Believing also that the ones who have acquired things wrongly or have built up wealth in an unjust way will never gain profit out of them. They will be punished for their appropriations.

So far, we have been covering the first half of SŪRA ḤAMD which is dealing with the praise of God and qualities attributed to Him. The second half of it deals with the worshipper's submission to God and begging for salvation and asking God to guide him to the right path. A few fundamental Islamic ideological points are also stated in this section.

ایاک نعبد

ĪYYĀKA - NA'BUDU

(You alone we do worship)

It means that all of our existence, whatever we are capable of bodily, mentally and spiritually are in the Hand of God. We do what is asked from us in the way of God.

A worshipper, by saying this statement, submits himself to God and frees himself from all bondages to any other being deity, etc. He rejects all other lordships especially the kinds which in the past history of mankind caused divisions among people and kept them under the yoke of oppression. Such a believer has progressed to a higher level of thinking. He and all other believers like him will never be again subservient to any other persons or systems unless they find them to be in accord with the way of God. This is the main principle of Islam and of all other revealed religions to worship none other than God and worship should be reserved for God only.

There are people who do not understand the true meaning of this principle perfectly and unknowingly get involved in worshipping other things. They are

thinking that just by praying to God and remembering the name of God they are worshipping God and God alone.

According to the Qur'ān and the prophetic traditions, they are wrong in their way of thinking.

The definition and the interpretation of worship in the Qur'ān and also in the traditions is absolute obedience and submission to orders. This order could be from a private or a collective source and the submission could include prayers with it or not.

Therefore, all those who bow and take their orders from governments or systems which are not Godly, are the followers and the promoters of those systems. And if these people leave some provisions in their private or social life to worship God, then, they are considered to be polytheists (worshippers of more than one God). And if there is not that little provision in someone's life to worship God, then he is an infidel (a person who denies the very existence of God or acts as if there is no God).

Supported by this knowledge about Islam, we can easily see why all other revealed religions before Islam had the statement of: لا اله الا الله (LĀ-ILĀHA ILLALLĀH)[8] (there is no god except ALLĀH) as their basic motto. We also understand what they were saying, who they were in opposition to and what were

their main objectives.

This concept (the meaning of worship) is very clearly and frequently, stated in the Qur'ān and also in AḤĀDĪTH[9] which leaves no doubts in the minds of intelligent thinkers. As an example it will suffice to refer to one Ayah (verse) from the qur'an and one ḤADĪTH from IMĀM ṢĀDIQ (A.S.)[10].

اِتَّخَذوا اَحبارَهُم وَ رُهبانَهُم اَرباباً مِن دُونِ اللهِ وَالمَسيحَابنَ مَريَمَ وَ مااُمِرُوا اِلاّ لِيَعبُدُوا اِلهاً واحِداً لااِلهَ اِلاّ هُوَ ...

(They have adopted their scholars and monks as lords instead of God, plus Christ, the son of Mary. Yet they have been ordered to serve only God Alone; there is no deity except Him...) the Holy Qur'an 9:31

The exegesis: NUR AL-THAQALAIN, vol.5, P.481 mentions under another Ayah from the Holy Qur'ān 39:17, which says,

وَالَّذينَ اجتَنَبُوا الطّاغُوتَ اَن يَعبُدُوها وَ اَنابُوا اِلَى اللهِ لِهُمُ البُشرىٰ

(The ones who turn aside from the arrogant ones lest they serve them, and turn toward God, will have good news.)

Abū Baṣīr narrates what IMĀM ṢĀDIQ (A.S.), addressing his true followers, said, "You are those who abstained from obeying the illegitimate rulers, obeying a tyrant is like worshipping him."

وایاک نستعین

WA ĪYYĀKA NASTA'ĪN

(and on You (alone) we call for help)

We never expect any help from Your rivals or the ones who claim godship. Because they do not worship God, they will not be of any real help to a true worshipper of God, or to the ones who seek the way of God. The way of God is the way that all the prophets followed. It is simple and straight and it leads to a just society, forming brotherly relations among people and promoting the idea of coexistence with other nations. In a Godly system, human beings and humanity are highly valued segregation, inequalities and oppressions are fought against. In order to be able to exploit people, most regimes and all those in power try to take these ideas away from the people. So how can one expect aid or assistance from such usurpers? They are continually opposing the truth and fighting fiercely against the believers in God.

Hence, we seek help from God only and stand on our own feet, using our God-given talents and potentials to reach our objectives. Learning the language of nature and understanding the intricate interrelationship of the underlying principles, will

open more avenues towards a higher level of thinking and a higher standard of life.

اهدنا الصراط المستقيم

IHDINAṢ ṢIRĀṬA 'LMUSTAQĪM

(Guide us to the right path)

If human beings were more in need of anything else than "Guidance", certainly that need would have appeared in the form of a request or prayer in SŪRA ḤAMD, which is the prologue of the Qur'ān and also an important part of the daily prayers (ṣalāt).

It is with the guidance of God that man's wits and wisdom are used in a constructive way, for the good of all. To use them in the wrong way is like providing a thief with a light in a dark night or leaving a sharp weapon at the hand of one insane.

The right path is the most natural and pleasant way to go forward and to satisfy most basic needs of human beings, under the circumstances. This path has been opened and traversed by the prophets of God they have been the pioneers. Once human beings take this road they find it smooth going, and with no hardship, it will lead to the final destination which is the advancement of mankind. This is logical. It should

be the objective of life to grow and develop ourselves to the highest level possible. If such a program is followed and adapted properly, it will bring nothing less than prosperity, freedom, mutual respect and brotherhood in a society. Man's chronic adversities will thereby be removed.

How to identify this path and differentiate it from all other misrepresentations? The most concise and clear description of it comes in the Qur'ān, in this same SŪRAH which is currently under discussion.

This SŪRAH goes on to read:

صراط الذين انعمت عليهم

ṢIRĀṬ 'LLADHĪNA AN'AMTA 'ALAIHIM

(The path of those whom You have favored)

Who are the ones that God has favored and are receiving His blessings? In this context, no doubt prestige, wealth and material possession are not considered to be blessings. Because, we find that the worst enemies of God and also of people are among those who enjoy these things the most. Here blessings are much higher and more valuable favors from God, such as vision, wisdom and gnosis. The most fortunate and the rightly guided ones, who are enjoying these

blessings, have a lot of respect for the whole of creation, human beings and also themselves.

In another place in the Qur'ān[11], these people are described as:

وَ مَن يُطعِ اللهَ وَالرَّسُولَ فَاُولئِکَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ اَنعَمَ اللهُ عَلَيهِم مِنَ النَّبيّينَ وَالصِدّيقينَ وَالشُهَداءِ وَالصالِحينَ ...

(Anyone who obeys God and the Messenger stands by those whom God has favored, such as prophets, loyal persons[12], martyrs and the honorable men.)..

Hence, the worshipper, by reciting the above statement requests God to lead him to the path of the prophets, loyal persons, martyrs and the honorable people. This road has been established for a long time and it has been traversed by many famous people. It is clearly marked as to where it leads.

Alongside this road, however, there is another route which is also clearly established, and it has had well- known travelers. The worshipper of God recalls that route and also its followers. He is in dread concerning going that way or being tempted to go that way. In his prayers he recites:

غير المغضوب عليهم

GHAIRI 'LMAGHḌŪBI 'ALAIHIM

(Not the path of those who earn your anger)

Who are the people who arouse God's wrath and anger? There are many; among them are those who go the opposite way of God and those who corrupt others and also lead the ignorant to the wrong path. And still there are many who force and pressure people to commit immoral acts. The tyrants, the deceitful and the sly are among them too. In the course of history, there have been dictators and oppressors who had people carry out degrading duties for them, so that they themselves could live in luxury.

It is evident that God's wrath is specifically directed towards those who knowingly and deliberately do wrong, and not those who make mistakes or unknowingly do something wrong.

History shows that, in general, the well-off people and the more powerful are those having none or very little religious beliefs.

Beside the above two groups, namely, the guided and the condemned ones, there is a third party which eventually ends up where the condemned ones go[13]. The next expression (in SŪRA ḤAMD) refers to this last group.

ولا الضالين

WA LAḌḌĀLLĪN

(Nor of those who have gone astray)

Those who follow a path other than the way of God, through ignorance or by following another astray person who think they are on the right path, but unfortunately for them, they will end up in an undesirable place.

There were many such people in the past who, faithfully or blindly, followed some leaders. They cheered for them loudly, and raised them above themselves. At the end, they were even abused by those leaders. These people were so addicted to their ways and also so very brainwashed that they could not hear the true messages coming to them through messengers of God. Most of the time they even opposed the true messages. They did not give themselves enough time to pause for a moment and to reconsider their positions in order to change the situation or to extract themselves from that stupid arrangement. This arrangement we call stupid because it was totally to the advantage of the oppressors and to the disadvantage of the oppressed. On the contrary the ways of the prophets were to weaken the position of the oppressors and strengthen the status of the

deprived and the oppressed.

A worshipper recalling the ways and means of the above two groups (the disfavored and the astray) will eventually come to a point to choose a way which he should follow. Evaluating his own situation, he finds the way he is following now, namely, the way of the prophets is the best for him. Once again he says, الحمدلله رب العالمين "ALḤAMDU LILLĀHI RABBI 'L'ĀLAMĪN"[14] Thanks God! (praise is due to ALLAH the Lord of the universe.)

In this manner the main part of the prayer (ṣalāt) is accomplished.

This was the opening chapter of the Qur'ān (FĀTIHATU 'LKITĀB).

Like most other prologues do, this one highlights the main ideas in the Qur'ān. As our ṣalāt is the summary of Islam on a small scale, this chapter is the summary of the Qur'ān in a concise way. The highlights appearing in this SŪRA are as follows:

(a) The universe and all that it contains as a unit belongs to God: رب العالمين (RABBI 'L 'ĀLAMĪN).

(b) Everybody and everything is always at the mercy of God, specially those who worship Him: الرحمن الرحيم (AL-RAḤMĀN AL-RAḤĪM).

(c) The life of a person does not abruptly ends

with death, it continues and God has total control over it: مالک یوم الدین (MĀLIKI YAWM-AL-DĪN).

(d) Human beings should be liberated form secular bondage and should never worhsip anyone else except God, their efforts should be directed towards the welfare of the others: ... ایـــاک نـــعبد و (ĪYYĀKA NA'BUDU)...

(e) Man should seek direction from God to find the prosperous way of life: اهـــدنا الصـــراط المســـتقیم (IHDINAṢ ṢIRĀṬA 'LMUSTAQĪM).

(f) A person should differentiate between enemies and friends and deal with each group according to his convictions: صراط الذین (ṢIRĀṬ 'LLADHINA) ....

سورہ

SŪRA

After reciting this rich and profound SŪRA, the worshipper recites another complete SŪRA from the Qur'ān.

This recitation is a portion of the Qur'ān which has been freely chosen by the worshipper, and it certainly represents other meaningful Islamic teachings.

To realize how important it is to read parts of the Qur'ān in our daily prayers we recall again the

quotation from Imām Riḍā (A.S.)[15]. It says that reciting the Qur'ān everyday, will help keep its ideas fresh in our memory and it also prevents the Qur'ān from becoming forgotten or being misunderstood.

In this monologue it is sufficient to translate SŪRA TAWḤĪD which is usually recited in the daily prayers (ṣalāt).

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

BISMI 'LLĀH AL-RAḤMĀN AL-RAḤĪM

(In the name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful)

قل

QUL

(say)

O Prophet! understand yourself and also tell others that:

هو الله احد

HUWA 'LLĀHU AḤAD

(God is unique[16])

He is not like other gods described by those distorted beliefs. He has no partners, no rivals and no equals, and there is no need for another god to

appear in the scene of the creation. All creation with its laws, formulae and principles has originated from only one source. This is why everything moves smoothly and the natural laws are going according to their set course. The only exception to this rule is, however in a small scale, mankind. And that is because he has been given the power to think and make decisions. Sometimes he does go astray and plays parts which are not in total harmony with the rest. But soon, he realizes, he cannot go very far unless he follows the natural laws (of course in the physical sense, but he is , still, free to think what he wants. God has given us, human beings, this ability and wants to see what we do with it.)

الله الصمد

ALLĀH AṢ-ṢAMAD

(God is the source [for everything])

It means the God, Whom I am worshipping now by kneeling and bowing in front of, is unlike other gods. Because other gods come and go, they are limited in time and also limited in space. And their existence depends upon someone or something else. Who needs such gods! These kinds of deities do not deserve to be

worshipped by man, because they are similar to man or even more inferior to him. It is not feasible for human beings with such high levels of thinking and so many potentials and capabilities, to submit and bow to anybody or anything which is created. Man being so profound and highly developed should worship the Almighty. He Who is free of all needs and Whose eternal existence and power initiates from His essence.

لم يلد

LAM YALID

(Neither given birth nor fathered anyone)
(He begets not)

He is not what is widely preached by many distorted religions, for instance the concept of the Father and the Son believed by many Christians and other polytheists. He has no child or children. He is the Creator of everything and everyone but not their father. Living things on earth or in any other place in the universe are servants of God but not His children.

This relationship (Master and slave) between God and human beings saves believers in God from serving other things or other people. Because one cannot

serve two masters.

Those who suggest that human beings are too high to be servants of God, have in reality opened the way for mankind to become slaves to others. Examining their lives one can see that they are actually serving ruthless bosses and leaders or they themselves are practicing some sort of slavery.

ولم يولد

WA LAM YŪLAD

(nor was He fathered) (nor is He begotton)

God is not a phenomenon, once being nothing and then coming into extistence. Nobody gave birth to Him nor was He born in someone's mind. He is not anything like what we know or we can imagine. He is a Supreme fact, Omnipresent, was always there and will always be there. (Eternal)

ولم يكن له كفواً احد

WA LAM YAKUN LAHŪ KUFUWAN AḤAD

(and there is nothing comparable to Him)

We cannot draw a resemblance between God and

anything we know of or can imagine. The influence and the dominance of God is all over the universe, so there is no need for anybody else to claim sovereignty over any part of it. We should not offer or submit our existence wholly or partly to anybody or anything else, be it living or lifeless, being real or virtual.

As we have noticed this SŪRA really invites people to monotheism. In many other parts of the Qur'ān the unity of God has been mentioned but this SŪRA says a lot in a very condensed form and uses expressions which were common among the misled people living in the era of paganism. Appearing at the end of the Qur'ān, for the last time it unequivocally negates the claims of all other deities.

This SŪRA describes the kind of God which deserves to be worshipped and tells the world what type of God do Muslims believe in. A god who is not unique and at the same time one can find many like him, among the people or elsewhere, is not suitable or desirable to be worshipped. A superpower or a tyrant who needs outside help to stay in power, let alone to stay alive, should not be imposed upon people. People should be vigilant as to not take them as their god. The ones who do obey or bow to these mortal puppets are actually degrading themselves and also the rest of mankind. The positive aspect of this

SŪRA is to show us the attributes of the Unique God and at the same time unveiling the flimsiness of the false ones.

There is also a gracious warning to Muslims and to all other believers in God not to spend a lot of their time and effort in philosophical arguments about the attributes and the nature of God. It is not conducive to raise doubts and then try to remove them. Time and effort are better used in what comes out of the idea of the unity of God and what man can do to enhance his faith.

Alī Ibn Al-Ḥussain (A.S.) says that, God knowing there would be many curious and inquisitive people later on, sent down, SŪRA TAWḤĪD and also verses in SŪRA ḤADĪD to set the limits for speculation about God. It is reiterated many times in the Qur'ān that those who exceed these limits gain nothing but perdition.[17]

SŪRA TAWḤĪD tells the worshipper that God is Almighty, Unique, Supreme, and free from need and want. He has not given birth to anyone, nor has anyone given birth to Him. There is none equal, none similar and nothing comes close to even resembling Him. This much vision and perception about God is enough for a Muslim to enable him to formulate his affairs. In a few other places in the Qur'ān there is

advice about not attempting too much analysis concerning the nature and the essence of God. To increase one's gnosis, one has to put into practice what he believes, rather than just continually speculating. Knowing that action speaks louder than words, we have to be living examples of monotheism. This is the way the prophets, loyal persons and the honorable chose to arrive at the cognition of God.

تسبیحات اربعه

TASBĪḤĀT ARBA'A

The Four Glorious Hymns

There are four meaningful facts about the Glory of God that the worshipper, normally, recites during the third and the fourth Rak'at[18] while standing. We prefer to explain the meaning of these expressions before translating the hymns which are recited in genuflection and in prostration.

1. سبحان الله SUBḤĀNA 'LLĀH (Pure and glorified is God).

2. والحمدلله WA 'LḤAMDU LILLĀH (Ultimate praise and gratitude is exclusive to God.)

3. ولااله الا الله WA LÀILĀHA ILLALLĀH (There is no deity except God.)

4. والله اكـــبر WA 'LLĀHU AKBAR (And God is the Greatest.)

In order to understand the meaning of monotheism completely one has to understand the meaning of the above statements. Each one of them reveals a different aspect of monotheism.

Repeating these statements in our daily prayers (ṣalāt) does not only increase our cognition of God, but it should bring about desirable behavioral changes in us.

Islamic beliefs in general should manifest themselves in our daily activities. Islam is a way of life. Surely understanding any facts about Islam is meaningful, but the ones we understand and act upon are more meaningful. In other words, in Islam, those types of beliefs which place more duties upon the shoulders of a person are highly recommended. Namely, to give someone more responsibilities.

Believing in the existence of God is one of those facts people who really believe in God have a different way of life than those who do not believe in the existence of God. A person who believes, he is part of the whole creation and has been created by a

powerful and a knowledgeable creator for a special purpose, acts more responsibly. He feels committed to an ideal and since he has an objective he has a direction in his life. He plans his activities, and consequently, works harder. A life with a purpose, as a whole, makes him happy and satisfied.

The same is true about believing in and understanding the meaning of The Judgement Day, Prophethood and Imamat. Each one of these will also leave an impact upon an individual and consequently, as a whole, make a distinguished, organized believer out of him.

On the surface and in our everyday life we do not observe a marked difference in the behavior of those who are followers of this school of thought and the ones who are not. Reasons we could cite here would be the lack of understanding of the basic principles or not having strong faith. However, the genuine believers and the imitators will be differentiated from each other at certain times during real life situations.

In light of the above discussion we will continue reviewing the contents of the four hymns.

سبحان الله (SUBḤĀN 'LLĀH). God is pure and devoid of partners, tyranny and deficiencies. He has not been created and does not make mistakes.

Moreover we cannot attribute to God qualities or imperfections like anything we know or can think of. God is above what we can ever imagine.

By making the above statement and remembering the Attributes of God the worshipper appreciates his position being in communication with Almighty God and offering his respects to the perfect Being and to the source of all beauty. Would anybody have any reservation in bowing to such a Deity? Prayer in Islam is like this: to go on one's knees and pay respect to Almighty God alone and praise Him as the source of all goodness, beauty and perfection. There is no humiliation here, everybody is proud of being able to appreciate beauty and perfection. This characteristic of man to see through the abstract and perceive things, such as beauty, love and benevolence, helps him go beyond other creatures and to reach what he can perceive. Would anyone not bow to perfect beauty, love or kindness? Of course, it is a blessing even to have appreciation for these things. The blessed ones who go along this path will increase their gnosis, and their lives will have meaning and direction.

Those who consider prayer to God or worshipping Him degrading have missed the point, because they compare it to our everyday bowing to and or kissing of someone's feet. As a matter of fact appreciating

beauty and paying tribute to ultimate purity and perfection is one of man's special traits ....

By stating سبحان الله SUBḤĀN 'LLĀH (God is pure and immaculate) we begin to think of The Supreme Perfection.

والحمدُلله (WA 'LḤAMDU LILLĀH). Looking at the days of our lives, we see what people usually go through in order to get something; let it be status, material goods or even the daily necessities of life. What type of people do we normally do our begging to, in order to receive our wages or allowances? Most of the time these people are even inferior to us but because they have status or can give a bit of what they have to us, we pay them so many compliments and show them so much respect.

Remembering that all glories and praises should go to God and everything belongs to God, makes life much easier for us. In reality God is providing everything for everybody, so no one has the right to withhold food and other necessities of life from people in order to get respect. Needy people should not consider the rich, the wealthy, the hoarders and the exploiters the real owners. Instead, people should try to do without them and at the same time consider them usurpers.

ولا اله الا الله (WA LĀ ILĀHA ILLALLĀH). This is the golden rule of Islam which shows the ideology of this school and its universality.

There is one negation and one affirmation in the above statement.

Firstly, it invalidates the control and the dominance of all secular super powers, tyrants and other unholy regimes over people.

It frees man from the yoke of slavery in any form. A true Muslim will not accept any power over God's power and will not do anything which is against God's order. With this magnificent negation he breaks away from miseries, bondage, slavery and indecisiveness.

He conforms himself to a Godly system, namely, to a real Islamic state. He chooses to obey God and not to obey people who order him to do things contrary to what God says.

To be obedient to God means arranging one's life style according to God's doctrines and to be a living example, a practicing Muslim and trying to promote the idea of establishing a Godly state.

Other secular social systems on earth, because they have been designed and founded by human beings, cannot lead mankind to prosperity and to the final objective. Man does not know everything and most of

the time is subjective, hence his designs cannot be perfect.

Only the Divine doctrines originated from the Supreme Being, knowing everything about human needs can be a suitable environment for the growth and the development of human beings.

Many prophets in one form or another have stated that, they had not been against other regimes or other nations, they cared for them and wanted them to be prosperous. Prophets are like kind fathers to people. They show them how to choose their way of life and explain to them that they will never find happiness in other systems unless they are theist and run according to God's decrees. Throughout the history of mankind, as well as what is going on now, we see the sufferings of human beings under regimes other than the holy one. What people have to go through to make a living is so degrading and painful to watch.

والله اكبر (WA 'LLĀHU AKBAR). For an ordinary person it is not so easy to break away from his way of life, no matter, how awful his life is. He feels too shaky, frightened and singled out to say no to tyranny, oppression and arrogance. He used to rely on these institutions before, but now by saying no to them he sees they are crumbling down in front of his eyes. His ignorance and the lack of confidence in himself on

one side, the fear of retaliation from the other side overwhelms him. So right at that moment, he says, "الله اكبر (ALLĀHU AKBAR)" God is Greater, greater than anything, anybody, any power and all the might there is. God is even Greater than what we can imagine. He is the architect of all natural and super natural laws. Man's success is only possible with conforming to these laws and following the guidelines God has prescribed for us.

Muhammad (S.A.W.A.) was very well aware of this fact. He was so sure about it that he alone resisted all the pressures exerted upon him by all the infidels of Mecca. Eventually, he succeeded in changing the minds of so many people who were going the wrong way. He showed them the right path, the path which will lead all human beings to salvation and it is the natural evolutionary course.

Whenever one finds himself powerless in fighting human injustices, if he remembers that God is the Supreme Power he will gain strength. His determination becomes so strong that no one can withstand him.

This was a brief account of the benefits, one can draw from saying and repeating the four hymns during the third and the fourth Rak'at of the prayer (ṣalāt) while standing.

رکوع

RUKŪ'

(Bowing down or genuflection)

After the related recitals[19] the worshippers bow down before God, Who is beyond the imagination and the praise of human beings. He is so great that the worshippers inevitably and willingly bend down in respect. This shows the worshipper's submission to Almighty God and to the main source of power which is above all other powers man can have. Hence, the worshipper does not have to bow down in front of any other being or object.

In this submissive position in front of God, the worshipper recites these praises to Him.

سبحان ربی العظیم و بحمده SUBḤĀNA RABBIA 'L'AZIMI WA BIḤAMDIH[20] (Pure and immaculate is my God- the Greatest - and I adore Him). In this position and with the appropriate words that he utters he himself and all others who witness him believe that he has entered the services of God and will serve no one other than God. The signs of happiness and the feelings of being free and dignified appear on his face.

سجود

SUJŪD

(Prostration)

After standing up again from Ruku', the worshipper prepares himself for a much deeper and a more profound prostration. He goes down to the floor.

Placing his forehead on the ground, which is the highest sign of humility for man. The worshipper offers this high respect to God, the source of absolute goodness and beauty. He knows and believes that he will never bow to such an extent before any other persons or objects. Because he finds it illegal to show such humility before other beings.

Having his forehead on the ground and being absorbed in the might of God, the worshipper utters these meaningful words:

سبحان ربی الاعلی و بحمده (SUBHĀNA RABBIA 'LA'LĀ WA-BIḤAMDIH[21] (I worship my God, Who is the Supreme). Here words and action are in harmony and human beings should reserve such praises and respect for God only and no one else.

Prostration during ṣalāt and going down on one's knees in front of God the Almighty, the most Glorious is not the same as bowing down before other

creatures who are themselves imperfect, let alone bowing to any objects or to some idols.

By this action the worshipper announces his submission and also obedience to God (the All-knowing, the All-seeing). It is understood that one who reaches this stage of servitude to God, has already broken away and freed himself from all other bondages and ties of slavery.

The most important outcome we expect to achieve from the wordings and the practice of genuflection and prostration is to know who we have to bow to. Once it is established that all of our praises and submission are exclusively directed to God, then we know no other being should be worshipped and praised. Perhaps this quotation[22] from Imam Reza (A.S.), which says, "Man is closest to God when he is having his forehead on the ground" is referring to that idea.

تشهّد

TASHAHHUD

(The act of testifying to the unity of God)

After the second Rak'at (unit of prayers) and also at the end of the last Rak'at in the daily prayer (ṣalāt)

the worshipper sits down and recites three statements where upon each one of these reveals facts about the faith.

This act together with the prescribed wordings is called "TASHAHHUD".

The worshipper professes the unity of God of the whole universe.

اشـــــهد ان لا اله الا الله (ASHHADU AN LĀILĀHA ILLALLĀH), (I testify that there is no other god except ALLAH).

Then he emphasizes this fact by saying:

وحدهٗ (WAḤDAHŪ) (Only He is the God (Lord) of the whole universe).

Immediately after, he says:

لا شـــــريک له (LĀ SHARĪKA-LAH) (There is no partner for God).

Whatever or whoever that brings man under the yoke of servitude is considered to be his god. Looking at things from this point of view, we see how, sometimes, we are following our own addictions, wishes and carnal desires. Even, we follow the wishes and orders of other people and other institutions, so that each one of these plays the role of god in relation to us.[23]

By professing لاالهالاالله (LA ILAHA ILLALLAH) the worshipper denies the influence of all these

sovereigns on his life.

The performance of TASHAHHUD is a testimonial to the negation of all other powers influencing one's life. The worshipper acknowledges that only God has sovereignty, and no other being.

As soon as a person understands and accepts this fact he himself should not allow anything else (be it human, animal, angel or even carnal desires) to govern his life.

This does not mean that a monotheist will not accept or follow social orders, rules, laws and contracts. It means he or she can refuse doing things which are not in accord with God's (Divine) principles. A good Musilm knows how to behave and how to differentiate between right and wrong. He gets his directions from sources other than those of human beings. Like everybody else in a society he follows rules and orders but when it comes to following his greed or someone else's illegitimate desires, he abstains. His standards are Allah's decrees. He also obeys those who operate according to the laws of God and especially those who have been assigned by God to guide the people. The mission of these leaders and mentors is only to guide people within the frame-work of God's decree. The following verses from the Qur'ān refer to them[24].

اطیعوا الله و اطیعوا الرّسول و اولی الامر منکم

AṬI'ULLĀH WA ATI'UL RASŪL
WA ULILAMRI MINKUM

(Obey God, the Prophet and those who are assigned by God to guide people).

(The Holy Qur'an 4:59)

Perhaps in due consideration to the same fact, the worshipper recites the second statement in TASHAHHUD as such:

واشهدُ انَّ محمّداً عبده و رسوله (WA ASHHADU ANNA MUḤAMMADAN 'ABDUHŪ WA RASŪLUH) (And I testify (profess) that Muhammad (S.A.W.A.) is the servant of God and is also His messenger).

The acceptance of Muhammad (S.A.W.A.) as the messenger of God implies the belief that what the Prophet says comes from God. Is there a better way to find the way of God than to follow the Messenger of God?

Many believers in God have gone astray while trying to find the way of God by themselves. So God sent Muhammad (S.A.W.A.) with a clear message to guide people. Believing that, Muhammad (S.A.W.A.) is a true messenger of God and he conveys the words

of God, is essential for all worshippers of Allah.

Another subtle point one can notice in the second statement is that the word servitude precedes the word messenger. This shows the Islamic value of the fact that one's superiority is measured by the purity of his servitude rather than his mission. As a matter of fact the virtue or excellence of a person is measured by the depth of his faith, specially having faith in Allah. The ones who go further and deeper into this duty are more superior to others.

People who are familiar with the concept of deification have no problem to understand the above statement. The rest of us should compare depending on God to depending on other beings other than God and come to a decision. God is most Graceful, Merciful and Omnipotent. The rivals are mean, selfish, exploitative and temporary. Is it not true that the main cause of people's sufferings can be traced back to their dependencies? (dependency upon other people, dependency upon addictions....) Is it not also true that depending on God will eliminate the need for depending upon other things?[25]

Testifying to the unity of God and testifying to the prophethood of Muhammad (S.A.W.A.) come together in TASHAHHUD. Worshippers who recite these two statements should keep in mind that merely

uttering these words has no value unless they be followed by appropriate actions and commitments. There are obligations and special codes of behavior for the believers in God and the believers in the prophethood of Muhammad (S.A.W.A.). Servitude according to these principles is the central issue and the worshipper in every ṣalāt renews his allegiance to God and His Messenger.

The third statement in TASHAHHUD is just an invocation and a request from God. The worshipper says, "اللهم صل على محمد و آل محمد" (ALLĀHUMMA ṢALLI 'ALĀ MUḤAMMAD WA ĀL-I MUḤAMMAD), (O God bless Muhammad (S.A.W.A.) and his progeny). Muhammad and his progeny (p.b.u.t.) are the perfect leaders of this school. Thus the worshipper through invocating reminds himself of these guidelines and renews his spiritual connection to them. It is mandatory to stay with the guidelines of every doctrine one chooses to follow, otherwise he may get lost. In Islam we follow these perfect living examples. This is how the teachings of the prophets survived throughout the history. There were dedicated able followers of the prophets who carried on the messages not only by words but mainly by showing it to others by living it in their lives. In the course of history very many

philosophers and thinkers appeared and departed they proposed fancy and elaborate ways of life for mankind. They could not practice themselves, nor did they leave behind any faithful practicing followers who could propagate their doctrines. So we do not see many followers of these people.

This is how the schools of the prophets survived and there is no sign or a trace of the schools of those philosophers around (except a mention of them in the history books).

The worshipper cordially sends his salutations to Muhammad (S.A.W.A.) and his progeny (p.b.u.t.) and wishes to strengthen his spiritual ties with them. This link and the tendency he feels towards them will lead him along the path he should be following.

Ending the Ṣalāt

Three Salām(s) or greetings appear at the end of each ṣalāt[26]. Of course they contain the name of God. Salāts in Islam begin with the name of God, and they end with the name of God. In between, also through the practice there are praises of God. If the name of the Prophet and his progeny are mentioned it is said with the name of God and also to thank God for sending abundant blessings to us.

The first Salām is directed to the Prophet(S.A.W.A.) and it also invokes God's blessing for him.

السلام علیک ایهاالنبی و رحمةالله و برکاته (AS-SALĀM 'ALAIKA AIYUHA 'L-NABĪ WA-RAḤMAT ALLĀH WA BARAKĀTUHU). (Greetings to you O Prophet of God and God bless you).

At this moment the worshipper is giving his due respect to Muhammad (S.A.W.A.), the founder of Islam. It was the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.A.) who raised the roar of Islam all over the world and established this religion which the worshippers are currently practicing. Islam is a way of life which insists upon the dignity of man. It allows and even encourages everyone to grow and develop to the best of whatever he or she can be. The Prophet (S.A.W.A.) envisaged, outlined and demonstrated to the people of the world the type of society under Islamic rule. What a great world it would be if everybody were to be so peaceful and close to God. These ideas enter into his mind, so the worshipper acknowledges the contribution of the Prophet (S.A.W.A.) towards the welfare of the human race and sends greetings to him.

The second greeting is directed to the worshipper himself and all others who have gone further along this line.

السـلام عـلينا و عـلى عـباد الله الصـالحين (AS-SALĀM ‘ALAINĀ WA ‘ALĀ ‘IBĀD ALLĀH AS-ṢĀLIḤĪN). (Greetings to us and all other righteous people). Thinking of all those that are pious and are the best specimens of humanity, he becomes more determind to follow them and to even become like them.

Looking around we see the world is polluted with wickedness, meanness, ugliness, arrogance, tyranny, crimes and corruption. Such pollution is found everywhere and almost everyone is drowning in it. Only a keen eye or a vigilant person can foresee through the glitter that a prevalent bankruptcy involving humanity is forthcoming ... Yes in a world so full of cries (right and wrong) we can barely hear the cries of the weak and the oppressed. The clamor, noise and the commotions of such demagogues as Mu’āwiya, Yazīd and Mansūr are covering up the need for the presence of true rulers such as Ali, Hussein and Sadiq (A.S.). In brief we can say, under the circumstances, as long as the devils and the devils’ advocates are in power, how can one expect fairness and justice? If it is at all possible to find a trace of decency in the society it will be very rare indeed.

Greetings should be given to those who, in spite of the difficulties involved, can reach out and give a hand to the needy and the helpless. The presence of

such people in a society is like a breath of fresh air (for a choking person). Thinking of the fact that there are good people around, encourages him not to give up. He thinks there are others like him and he is not alone. As in the course of history one sees, here and there, there were people who did not join the crowd, specially the crowd of corrupt and deviated people. They came up with better ways of life for their societies. Today, also according to God's principles, we find pious people who worship God, fight against injustices and oppose oppression.

Who are these Godly and deserving people? Where are they? Is it not wise to learn from the pious and follow them? Of course, the moment the worshipper finds himself kneeling with them, sends greetings to them in his prayers (SALĀM to us and to all virtuous people), he is actually united with them. He feels proud to be in their ranks. If he finds himself a bit short of or not quite up to par with them, he feels a little ashamed but it gives him renewed energy, direction and determination to follow his objectives.

What are the characteristics of the pious? What is meant by piety? Piety is not, solely, measured by the number of prayers one says. It is the worthiness of one's performance in his religious duties and how well he serves God. Does he deserve to be called pious?

It is just like a competent student who gets a high mark with distinction in a class. He has to distinguish himself from all others to be deserving such recognition.

And finally, the third greeting is directed to all good people, angels[27] and everybody who is praying with the worshipper. He says,

السـلام عـليكم و رحـمةالله و بـركاته (AS-SALĀM 'ALAIKUM WA- RAḤMATU ALLĀH WA BARAKĀTUH). (Greetings to you all and God bless you). In this last statement, once more, he reminds himself of the meritorious and angelic attitudes, sends greetings to everyone and asks God to have mercy on them.

Notes and References

1. MATHNAWI, by Jalau'ddin Rumi, translated by Reynold A. Nicholson, Book V, verses 2049-50.

2. Translator's note: إِنَّ الصَّلوةَ كانَت عَلَى المُؤمِنينَ كِتاباً مَوقُوتاً (Prayer is a timely prescription for believers.), the Holy Qur'an 4:103

3. Quotation from the Prophet (S.A.W.A.), "Ṣalāt acts as an ascension for a believer." اَلصَّلوة مِعراجُ المُؤمِن

4. Quotation from Imām Riḍā (A.S.) narrated by Faḍl Ibn Shādhān:
إِنَّما اَمَرَ الناسَ بِالقِراءَةِ فى الصَلوٰةِ لِئَلاّ يَكونَ القُرآنَ مَهجوراً مُضيعاً وَ يَكونَ مَدروسا فَلا يَضمَحِل وَ لايَجهل.

5. إِنَّ الصَّلوةَ تَنهى عَنِ الفَحشاءِ وَ المُنكَرِ (surely ṣalāt keeps (one) away from indecency and evil,) the Holy Qur'ān 29:45

6. SŪRA ḤAMD is the opening chapter of the Qur'ān.

   SŪRA = SŪRAH= Chapter

7. و رحمتى وسعت كلّ شئ My mercy embraces everything (the Holy Qur'an 7:156)

   يا من سبقت رحمته غضبه (the mercy of God exceeds His wrath), MATHŪR prayer.

8. According to the Holy Qur'ān 7:59-158 and 11:50 -84, we see how some of the prophets in the past used this statement at the beginning of their calls.

9. Quotations from the Prophet (S.A.W.A.) and other IMAMS (A.S.).

10. (A.S.)='ALAIHI AL-SALĀM

11. the Holy Qur'ān 4:69.

12. Those who have proven their faith and live in the way of God and his Prophet.

13. There are specific mentions on different occasions about this group in the Holy Qur'ān: 9:91-102; 38:58-61; 14:21-22 and 23:47-48.

14. Reciting this phrase at the end of SŪRA ḤAMD is recommended.

15. Refer to foot-note 4.

16. God is sole and Unique, the pronoun HUWA (He) is just for respect, and also for telling that He is Unique.

17. ان الله عز و جل علم انه يكون فى آخر الزمان اقوام متعمقون، فانزل الله تعالى: «قُل هُوَ اللهُ اَحَدٌ» و الايات من سورة الحديد الى قوله: «عَليمٌ بِذاتِ الصُّدُور»، فمن رام وراء ذلک فقد هلک.
Refer to (NŪR ALTHAQALAIN Vol.5, P.706 according to Uṣūl Kāfi)

18. A unit of prayer or one of the steps in the ṣalāt.

19. Recitals are readings in the first, 2nd, 3rd and the fourth Rak'at while standing, ḤAMD and SŪRA during first and second Rak'at, the four glorious hymns or just SŪRA ḤAMD during the 3rd. and

the 4th Rak'at.

20. Instead, one can say three times (SUBḤĀN 'LLĀH) if he wants to.

21. One may recite SUBḤĀNA 'LLĀH, three times instead.

22. اقرب ما یکون العبد الی الله و هو ساجد SAFĪNAT'L -BIḤĀR (Vol.1, under S.J.D.)

23. Refer to the contents of the verses from the Holy Qur'ān such as: 45:23 (Have you seen someone who has taken his passion as his god?); 9:31 (they have adopted their scholars and monks as lords instead of God ....: Yet they have been ordered to serve only God Alone); 28:38 (Pharaoh said, "Councilmen, I have not known any god for you except myself.") and also the traditions such as: "Their bellies are their gods."

24. Considering verses from the Holy Qur'ān such as 4:80 (Anyone who obeys the Messenger has obeyed God [Himself]); 5:55 (Your patron is God [Alone], as well as this messenger and those who believe who keep prayer, pay the welfare tax and bow their heads [in worship]); and traditions such as "See those among you who narrate our tradition..." and "the 'Ulamā" are the trustees of God among His created beings" can approximately show this fact.

25. Translator's note: God is the only single source which can fulfill all of our needs. On top of it man's dignity, respect and self reliance will also be

restored. What a better way to be connected to the source and find all the inspirations and strength through the heart? God being the source of boundless wisdom and all the benevolence, then who needs to bow down to another human being or an idol? Is it not true that the establishment of relations with God will sever man's dependency upon others? Hence, there comes a loss of another servant to the exploitors who gain a lot by keeping people under bondage. Reliance of people upon other people or things are the source of social problems. Dependents remain weak, exploited and unrewarded. The more they go for rewards and fulfillments the more frustated they get, because human beings can not fulfill all the needs of another human being. It also happens that due to arrogance and selfishness many people deprive others from their rights. Examples of such incidence are known to everyone.

26. Only the third Salām is obligatory, the first two, are recommended; they could be omitted.

27. This is in reverence to or an awesome tribute to higher states of being.